

DECISION RECORD
for the Environmental Assessment for the
Cottonsnake Timber Sale

EA# OR-118-03-006

Decision

It is my decision to implement Alternative 2 and the Project Design Features proposed in the Cottonsnake Timber Sale Environmental Assessment (EA # OR118-03-006). The approved action will result in a timber sale within the boundaries of the Middle Cow Creek fifth field watershed. It will also include two units (units 1, and 5B) that extend north into the 5th field Middle Creek watershed, a Tier 1 Key Watershed.

The Cottonsnake Planning Area is located west of Interstate 5 and includes the town of Glendale at the southwest corner. The legal description is T32S, R6W, sections 5, 19; T32S, R7W, sections 13, 23, 25; T33S, R6W, section 6; and T33S, R7W, sections 1, 9, 10, 11, 13 in Douglas County. Lands within the Planning Area are intermingled blocks of public and private lands; however, my decisions apply only to BLM-administered lands. The Cottonsnake timber sale will be sold in September 2003.

Harvest treatments will be done through a combination of regeneration harvest, commercial thinning, and selective harvest methods, as specified in the EA (Table 2-4, pp. 20, 21). Yarding systems include approximately 8 acres of tractor logging, 113 acres of cable logging and 201 acres of helicopter logging. Approximately 5-9 million board feet of timber will be removed from 18 harvest units totaling approximately 322 acres. For regeneration harvest units, the target number of trees to be retained would be 6-12 large conifers and 3 large hardwoods per acre, as well as snags and down logs to provide biological legacies and large structure. The actual number of trees retained would vary between units in order to provide additional coarse woody debris, where lacking, and additional shade on harsher sites. Units within connectivity/diversity blocks (units 1, 2A, 2B, 13A, 13B, 27 and 28) would retain at least 12-18 trees per acre (tpa) and 25-30 percent of late-successional forest habitat.

Following harvest, most of the units will receive site preparation/fuels treatments as specified in Table 2-1 (pp. 15, 16) of the EA. Regeneration harvest units will be reforested using planted nursery stock. Additional treatments, such as shade-carding, mulching, deer browse protection and controlling competing vegetation might be required to ensure adequate seedling establishment. Maintenance treatments will be implemented for up to ten years following harvest or until the canopy has closed enough to reduce brush species growth.

Approximately 21 miles of existing rocked roads and 3.3 miles of natural surface roads will be used for hauling, 35 miles will be renovated, 2.2 miles will be decommissioned, 1.4 miles will be blocked and 0.8 miles of road will be abandoned (EA Table 2-2, 2-5, pp 17, 18, 21, 22). There would be 0.1 miles of temporary road construction but no new

permanent road construction.

One of the Project Design Features (EA, p. 8) says that “unit 5B would avoid timber cutting on steep head wall slopes and slopes over 65 percent.” After ground verifying the extent of the headwall, the unit was reduced in size to approximately 2 acres to avoid the most sensitive slopes. There are a few slopes greater than 65 percent within the current 2-acre unit. The soils specialist for the project visited the site and determined that the planned commercial thin harvest in this unit, using helicopter yarding, would create a minimal potential risk to landslides and no reduction in site productivity. This assessment is consistent with the Timber Production Capability Classification Handbook for the Medford District (p. M9.1).

For contract purposes units 4A and 4B in the EA will be combined and be referred to as unit 4A. Both of these units were prescribed the same harvest and silvicultural method in the EA.

This decision includes the recommended pine enhancement monitoring efforts described in Chapter 4 of the EA.

Rationale

The decision to implement this proposal meets the purpose and need identified in the EA and furthers the intent established in the Northwest Forest Plan and the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) to manage the matrix lands with commercial forest products as a major objective.

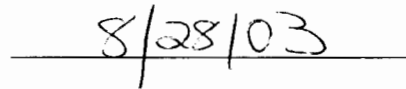
There were over a dozen letters/e-mails from the public, containing over 70 pages of comments, regarding the Cottonsnake Timber Sale Environmental Assessment. It should be noted that the intent of this environmental assessment (under the National Environmental policy Act CEQ regulation 1508.28) is to determine if there are significant impacts and whether these impacts have already been analyzed in the Medford Resource Management Plan and Northwest Forest Plan. The Cottonsnake Timber Sale EA tiers to these higher level plans. I carefully reviewed all of the public comments we received before coming to this decision. Many of them expressed legitimate resource concerns which have been addressed in the RMP and NFP or other analyses. Others were not considered substantive or are outside the scope of the project. For example, objections to cutting late seral forest stands were already addressed by the NFP when it allocated approximately 7.4 million acres within late seral reserves. Some comments were not considered substantive such as requesting additional analysis of harvesting on riparian reserves. As stated in the EA “riparian reserves would be established along all intermittent and perennial streams...No timber harvest would occur within riparian reserves” (p.7). Some comments, such as requesting a carbon sequestration alternative under a global climate change, were considered outside the scope of the project.

I am confident that the EA represents a thorough analysis of the site-specific impacts to affected habitats and species, in light of the more comprehensive analysis done in the Medford RMP and Northwest Forest Plan to which the EA is tiered. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) calls for concise and focused descriptions of the proposals and their effects; not all background information is required to be part of the NEPA document.

In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulations (43 CFR 5003.2(1)), the decision for this timber sale will not become effective, or be open to formal protest, until the first Notice of Sale appears in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located.



Lynda L. Boody
Field Manager, Glendale Resource Area
Medford District, Bureau of Land Management



Date

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
for the Environmental Assessment for the
Cottonsnake Timber Sale
EA # OR118-03-006

The proposed actions for the Cottonsnake Timber Sale are described in the environmental assessment (EA) and can be obtained at the Medford District or on the Medford BLM internet site: <http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford>

The proposed action is located in: T32S, R6W, sections 5, 19; T32S, R7W, sections 13, 23, 25; T33S, R6W, section 6; and T33S, R7W, sections 1, 9, 10, 11, 13 in Douglas County.

The following critical elements identified in the BLM handbook will not be adversely affected by this project and have been analyzed in the EA: air quality, areas of critical environmental concern, historical or cultural resources, prime or unique farmlands, floodplains, Native American religious sites, invasive species, energy, threatened or endangered species, known hazardous waste areas, water quality, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness and environmental justice.

Surveys for Survey and Manage plant and animal species have been completed and appropriate protocol buffer measures will be applied. The effects on Threatened and Endangered Species and Special Status Species are described in the EA. Formal and informal consultation requirements, as required under the Endangered Species Act, have been met with US Fish and Wildlife Service's Biological Opinion (#1-7-01-F-032) and (Ref. # 1-15-03-f-160) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) letter of concurrence on "not likely to adversely affect" Oregon Coast (OC) coho salmon. NOAA Fisheries also found that the proposed actions are unlikely to adversely affect any designated essential fish habitat (EFH) in the same letter dated July 11, 2003.

The estimation of impacts was based on research, professional judgment and experience of the interdisciplinary team. This method of estimating effects to the environment reduces the uncertainties to a level which does not involve highly unknown or unique risks.

FONSI DETERMINATION

I have reviewed the environmental assessment, including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts not previously identified, and I have also reviewed the comments received from the public concerning this proposal. I have determined that the Cottonsnake Timber Sale will not have any significant impacts on the human environment beyond those already described in the *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, approved April 13, 1994; the *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* for the Medford District, approved June 1995; and the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey*

and Manage, Protection Buffer, Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines,
approved January 2001. Therefore a supplemental EIS is not required.

Lynda L. Boody

Lynda L. Boody
Glendale Resource Area Field Manager
Medford District, BLM

8/28/03

Date